

Historical Transformation of the “Spirit of *Wa*” and the Problem: A Foresight into the Future of Japanese Society and Thought of Management¹⁾

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I. The Seventeen Article Constitution established by Prince Shotoku (574-622) and the “Spirit of *Wa*” as a Social Ethics

The social concern with ethics and moral in Japan has been growing for the last several years. We should notice that there are attempts to revive the “spirit of *wa*” more than little. The question we have to ask here is historical transformations of the “spirit of *wa*” and the problem.

We can say that *wa*, often translated into English as the spirit of harmony, has constituted a foundation for the Japanese perception of value and ethics; this concept of *wa* has been widely known since long. However, in the context of Japanese culture, the meaning of the word *wa* must be understood differently from the original meaning of the English word harmony. The “spirit of *wa*” is a frame of mind to place emphasis on avoiding confrontation

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1) This paper is a new version that retouched the one making as the discussion paper for a joint research concerning the business ethics, and having submitted it to Dr. Kun Young Chung (Keimyung University, Korea) and Dr. John W. Eichenseherr (University of Wisconsin-Madison, U.S.A.) at the end of 2005. Japanese version of the paper is collected to my book, Sengonihonn no Kigyoshakai to Keieishiso: CSR-Keiei wo Kataru hitotono Bunnmyaku (*Business Society and Management Thoughts in postwar Japan: A Context that talks about CSR Management*, Bunnsinndo, 2007). My paper is not the one having aimed at the analysis of the questionnaire survey result of putting as appendix 2 directly. The result of the joint research was reported under the theme of “Ethical Perceptions of Business Students: Differences between East Asia and the U. S. and Among ‘Confucian’ Cultures” in ‘World Business Ethics Forum (Theme: Does East Meet West?)’ held from the 1st to 3rd on November, 2006 in Hong Kong and Macau.

or antagonism, and in some cases such as where harmony among the members of a society is threatened, even to refuse to admit the existence confrontation or incoherence, rather than to adjust it after it has happened. *Wa* is the spirit of harmony forming through emotional linkage between people in various kinds of human relationships. Generally viewed, ethics in the Japanese society have meant the codes that people must abide by to realize and maintain the *wa* as understood as above. It is in this sense that Tetsuro Watuji defined ethics as the reason or senses of the relationship between human beings²⁾.

Japanese are said to have always been concerned to act so that there is harmony among people and between people and nature. It seems that this trait of Japanese has formed largely under the influences of the climate of the country, the view of the people on nature, and nature worship in which these are combined with ancient myths. The country is composed of many islands, it is also mountainous, and therefore, the domains of life of most people used to cover only small areas. In addition, the land has experienced many earthquakes since the beginning of history. In spite of all these, generally, the natural environment of Japan has provided conditions favourable to people's life; ancient Japanese called the country "the land of abundant reed plains and rice fields", which means that the land is fertile and crops are always plentiful. The country has four seasons, and each of the seasons has its own flavor and atmosphere. All in all, the country has a healthy climate, and people have lived closely to the change of nature from season to season. It is therefore considered that the sensibility of the Japanese people with which they live in concord among themselves and in harmony with the change of nature has formed through their way of living close to the change of nature. The nature worship of Japanese formed itself through the combination of their view that they had to collaborate with each other (form *wa*) to enjoy the benevolent facet of nature and the worship of *yaoyorozu no kami* in the myths, or innumerable deities residing in all the things in the universe³⁾. The nature worship of the Japanese people is considered to be the essence of Shintoism, the religion unique to Japan, but in order to distinguish it from the later Shintoism protected by the

2) See. Wasuji, Teturo, *Ninngenn no Gaku tositeno Rinnrigaku (Ethics as Human Study)*, Iwanamisyotenn, 1934. Wasuji, *Nihonn Rinnri Shisoushi, Jyokann, Gekann (The History of Ethical Thought in Japan, two-volume)*, Iwanamisyotenn, 1952.

3) See. Hirayama, Ikuo, *Nihonn no Kokoro wo Kataru (On a Japanese Heart)*, Chuokoronshinsya, 2005. Kawai, Hayao, *Korekara no Nihonn (Japan in the Future)*, Usiosyupannsy, 1999. Nakamura, Gen, *Nihonn Shisoushi (Japanese Intellectual History)*, Touhousyupann, 1988.

state, it would be appropriate to call it “down-to-earth Shintoism”. It might be more suitable to regard this primitive Shintoism as a facet of Japanese culture rather than a religion, as the famous Japanese painter Ikuo Hirayama states⁴⁾.

Prince Shotoku, who is considered to have formed the foundations of the state of Japan in the early seventh century, codified the above mental structure of the Japanese people for the first time⁵⁾. He instituted the Seventeen-article Constitution: in the first place, he told, “Harmony is the greatest of virtues”, then instructed that it was necessary to reach an agreement among people through amicable dialogues refraining from acting arbitrarily on authority, and concluded that once a consensus was formed anything could be accomplished, asserting the dramatic effect of *wa*. He also emphasized the importance of serving the public without being tethered to personal affairs. One may regard the Constitution as the first case in which the “spirit of *wa*” was formulated from the viewpoint of running a state and set out before people as an ethical model of a society. However, the Constitution was one that defined an ideal community that those who were responsible for the politics and administration of a state should aim at realizing, or the codes that the members of a limited group of high social standing should abide by. It was much later that the “spirit of *wa*” was set before the public in general as an ethical model of a society. What is more, as Masahide Sato points out⁶⁾, the “spirit of *wa*” set out in the Constitution was not that commonly understood, namely the emotional linkage between people in various kinds of human relationships as defined at the beginning hereof, but was that based on humbleness toward one’s self and others derived from the consciousness of the fact that one can know the true and real being of anything in the universe only imperfectly. To correctly understand the characteristics of the ethical perception and behavioral pattern of the Japanese society, it is necessary to focus our attention on the contrast between the “spirit of *wa*” that Prince

4) See, Hirayama, *op.cit.*, p.113.

5) For Prince Shotoku and The Seventeen Article Constitution refer to following documents. Yamada, Munemutu, *Nihonn Syoki (Chronicles of Japan)*, Nyutonn Puresu, 2004. Umebara, Takesi and others, *Syoutoku Taisi no Jituzou to Gennzou (Real Image and Virtual Image of Prince Shotoku)*, Yamatosyobou, 2002. Ooyama, Saiichi, ed., *Syoutoku Taisi no Sinnjitu (The True concerning Prince Shotoku)*, Heibonnsya, 2003. Hanayama, Nobukatu, *Syoutoku Taisi to Kennpou 17jyou (Prince Shotoku and The Seventeen Article Constitution)*, Ookurasyupann, 2003.

6) Sato, Masahide, *Nihonn Rinnri Shisoushi (The History of Ethical Thought in Japan)*, Toukyo University Syutupannkai, 2003, p.67.

Shotoku set out in the Constitution and that of later generations⁷⁾.

Legends tell that Prince Shotoku referred to the teachings of Buddhism and Confucianism in codifying the “spirit of *wa*” in the Seventeen-article Constitution. In fact, these two religions had influences on the interpretation and consolidation of the “spirit of *wa*”.

What must be considered in this respect in the first place is the philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism to the effect that everything in this universe is interrelated with each other, that one’s being alive is nothing but being allowed to live by others (in other words, one’s being alive is viable only within the interrelation of all the things in the universe), and that being allowed to live by others is the true state of being alive⁸⁾. This philosophy also leads to egalitarianism. It would be appropriate to mention here that Hinayana Buddhism, another school of Buddhism, places importance on attaining emancipation or self-enlightenment through austerities or self-discipline. Perhaps, such a way of attaining self-enlightenment intensifies the “sense of togetherness with nature” that we feel and enjoy. It is highly likely that, as Hirayama states, these philosophies were easily acceptable to those who possess the sensibility based on “the down-to-earth Shintoism” or the nature worship which constitutes a facet of the Japanese culture rather than a religion. In yet another step forward, Hirayama made a very interesting remark⁹⁾: the sense of *mottainai* (an adjective meaning that the value of a thing is wasted) of the Japanese people has its root in the frame of mind, similar to the above teachings of Buddhism, which they keep in their deep psyches, and this sense

7) The following point that Thomas P. Kasulis of Ohio State University who is professor of the comparison thought marks will raise interesting and challenging questions. He is describing on the assumption that *Nihonnsyoki*, *Sintou*, and *Kojiki* had already been translated in the sphere in English in the early 1900’s since the latter half of 1800’s as follows. “Thus, it was considered the foundation of the Japanese sentence discernment with *Nihonnsyoki* and *Kojiki* in the sphere in English. The reader in the sphere in English did not think as nobody with beginning be newly considered these stories to be Genesis by the Japanese in about 1800 at most. In a word, 1000 years afterwards though the approval of *Nihonnsyoki* and *Kojiki* was the 8th century were not “Classics of ancient Japan”. Kasulis, Thomas P., ‘Eigoken niokeru *Nihon Tetugaku*’, James W. Heisig, ed., *Nihonn Tetugaku no Kokusaisei: Kaigai niokeru Juuyou to Tennbou, Sekaisisousya*, 2006, p.81.

8) For association with two Buddhism and the “spirit of *wa*” refer to following documents. Hirayama, *Nihonn no Kokoro wo Kataru (On a Japanese Heart)*. Kawai, *Korekarano-Nihonn (Japan in the Future)*. Nakamura, Gen, *Nihonn Shisoushi (Japanese Intellectual History)*. Sato, *Nihonn Rinnri Shisoushi (The History of Ethical Thought in Japan)*.

9) Kawai, *op.cit.*, pp.190-191.

of *mottainai* constitutes a very important part of their morals. He pointed out, further, that the word *mottainai* was originally not the one for refraining from prodigality but was the one to teach to appreciate and respect the preciousness of everything. He explains the reason for this as follows: a grain of rice or a sheet of paper may look trivial, but it also constitutes a part of “the infinite interrelation of all the things in the universe” that makes one’s being possible, and exactly for this reason, it is *mottainai* to spend it without due respect. This is a very important statement.

On the other hand, Confucianism, a philosophical system founded by Confucius (552–479, B.C.) of China, is familiar to us through the Analects of Confucius, the memoirs of the saying and doings of Confucius and his disciples¹⁰⁾. From the viewpoint of ethics and moral values, one can say that the essence of his philosophy consists of the following three: the first is *chu* and the second is *kou*, both based on *jin*, and the third is *houon* that combines *chu* and *kou* with *jin*. *Jin* is the benevolence and righteousness of the world, which creates and fosters everything. When used for a person in the form such as “a person of *jin*,” the word means the ability to overcome one’s self and nurturance or affection toward others. *Houon* means a due response to such nurturance or affection. When such a response is directed to a lord or organizational superior, it is called *chu* meaning fealty or loyalty, and when directed to a parent or elder family member, it is called *kou* meaning filial devotion or obedience. In the context of the philosophy and ethics of the politics and people’s life, a leader must exercise *jin* in running an organization or a family, and the members of the organization or family must respect and endear the leader (*houon*) for reasons of his or her *jin*, and fulfil their duties given by the leader (*chu* or *kou*).

II. Japanese Way of Introducing of Confucianism and “Mechanisms” to “Proactive Acceptance” of the “Spirit of *Wa*”

As stated earlier herein, the “spirit of *wa*” that forms the foundation of the mental structure of the Japanese people was derived from their nature worship, or the down-to-earth Shintoism, and the combination of philosophical systems such as Buddhism and

10) For association with the Analects of Confucius or Confucianism and the “spirit of *wa*” refer to following documents in addition to 7). Uno, Tetuto, *Ronngo Sinnacyaku (New Interpretation of the Analects of Confucius)*, Koudansha, 1980. Moriya, Hiroshi, *Ronngo no Ninngennngaku (Humanics of the Analects of Confucius)*, Purejidenntosya, 1989.

Confucianism. Prince Shotoku codified the “spirit of *wa*” in a simple manner in the form of the Seventeen-article Constitution; one easily sees that the Constitution strongly reflected the nature worship, Buddhism and Confucianism. The Constitution was one that defined an ideal community that those who were responsible for the politics and administration of a state should aim at realizing, or the codes that the members of a limited group of high social standing should abide by, and not the one that set out the “spirit of *wa*” before the public in general as an ethical model of a society. Thereafter, though after a long time, up to the end of World War II, attempts were made from the viewpoint of running a state to make the “spirit of *wa*” permeate among people as an ethical model of the society.

The introduction of Confucianism played especially significant roles in the process of those attempts, which was the process of proposing various virtues that enabled the “formation and maintenance of *wa*”, which was the very strategic factor for maintaining and developing the state. Confucianism, the basic spirit of which is to aim at ruling a state based on *jin* (benevolence and righteousness), continued to be useful not only for the ruling class during the feudal period but also for the state policy to increase national wealth and military power under the slogan of “catch up with and overtake the Western powers” that prevailed from the Meiji Period (1867 to 1912) up to the end of World War II (1945). Naturally, Confucianism was adapted in a manner unique to Japan in the above process: rather than placing *chu* (loyalty) and *kou* (filial devotion) on the basis of ruling a state based on *jin*, the state administration based on *jin* was elaborately concealed from the people, and *chu* and *kou* were extolled so that *houon* (due response) was directed to the ruling class and superiors. It would be appropriate to say that the Japanese way of introducing Confucianism was done by neglecting *jin*, as Ruth Benedict pointed out in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sward – Patterns of Japanese Culture* (1946)¹¹⁾. She meant by this that *chu* and *kou* were required of the people unconditionally. However, in such a case, while the exercise of these virtues may be maintained over a short term, it is highly likely to wane in the medium and long terms. To prevent it from waning, it was necessary to provide something else in place of *jin*. In Japan, what filled the place was the “formation and maintenance of *wa*”. In the case of the Seventeen-article Constitution of Prince Shotoku, the basic philosophy was that humbleness toward each other (corresponding to *jin*) led to virtues such as people’s

11) See, Benedict, Ruth, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sward – Patterns of Japanese Culture*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1946. Hasegawa, Matuji, translation, *Kiku to Katana: Nihonn Bunnka no Kata*, Syakaishisousya, 1967, pp.137-140.

contribution to public (corresponding to *chu* and *kou*), and *wa* formed through this process. Here, we can see a change in the positioning of *wa* resulting from the Japanese adaptation of Confucianism, and this provided a foundation for the common interpretation of the “spirit of *wa*” of the Japanese people.

However, even if the need for and importance of *chu* and *kou* are emphasized for the sake of the “formation and maintenance of *wa*”, it is impossible to firmly establish a system for forming and conserving social order in a long-lasting manner, unless people understand and accept the importance of *chu* and *kou*. In order for this to take place, it was necessary to set up additional mechanisms for creating “sense of proactive acceptance” of *chu* and *kou* among people. I would name the following two as such mechanisms.

One was to define all the members of a group as being in the same boat; here the word group means any type of group formed by people such as a family, a village community as a network of families, a corporation of the present society, a trade organization as a network of corporations, and a nation covering all such groups. In such a group in which the members are supposedly bound by common destiny (hereinafter called a group bound by common destiny), each member has no choice but to understand that the repercussion of the fruits of the performance of the group to each member can be enjoyed only through the performance of the group as a result of the effects of *wa*. I understand that this mechanism was designed to elicit the real “sense of proactive acceptance” from people through the realization that personal benefit could be earned only through active contribution to the group.

The other mechanism was that to form a sense of unity among people and, through it, the real “sense of proactive acceptance” by defining the whole nation of Japan as a large *ie* with the emperor at the apex. The word *ie* means a family as a continuous entity as well as a house; it can also mean a group bound by common destiny in the traditional Japanese language. Plainly put, this is nothing but appropriation of the authority of the emperor. From the Meiji Restoration in 1868 to the end of World War II in 1945, the government intensified the sense of unity of the Japanese people through various measures using the state-sponsored Shintoism; such measures included the deification of the emperor, governmental sponsorship of shrines dedicated to his ancestors, and so forth.

However, the state-sponsored Shintoism was abolished after the World war II, the position of the emperor was redefined as the symbol of the unity of the people, acceptance of modern ideas such as the Western democracy and respect for the rights of individuals

was encouraged, pacifism was introduced and established in a form unique to the country, and as a result, the above second mechanism quickly lost its effects. It is no exaggeration to say that what still rests of the two mechanisms for creating the “sense of proactive acceptance” among people is only the first one. The first mechanism has had significant effects especially in the business sector; the success story of the Japanese-style business management cannot be told without referring to it. However, the real “sense of proactive acceptance” that depends on the “formation and maintenance of *wa*” is decaying little by little in the situation as described below.

The changes in the political and economical environments surrounding the country since the 1990s, namely the stagnation of the Japanese economy and the progress of globalization, have significantly shaken typically Japanese employment practices such as the lifetime employment and seniority system. Introduction of a radical pay-per-performance system has deteriorated employment conditions. What is more, because of single-minded policies for the shift from the public to the private sector envisaging a small government, the Japanese society is transforming into one based on self-responsibility. If such a movement progresses further, the Japanese people will surely cease to regard a corporation or the Japanese society as a group bound by common destiny any longer, individualism will root deeper in the society, and dislike of the “spirit of *wa*” will spread wider. Now the social space where young people can behave comfortably and retrieve themselves is becoming narrower and narrower. However, this does not mean that young people do not have the “spirit of *wa*” ; they hate the “spirit of *wa*” as required by superiors or forced from outside, but do not refuse “*wa*” of their own. Rather, the “*wa*” of their own is exactly what they want to have.

III. From the “Spirit of *wa*” to the “Situational Ethics”

I have explained herein the mechanisms that combine the “formation and maintenance of *wa*” with *chu* (loyalty) and *kou* (filial devotion) and the change that occurred to the mechanisms. These mechanisms constitute the framework that has molded the perception of value and ethics and behavior of the Japanese people, and it also provides a viewpoint from which these traits of the Japanese people are studied. The object of this paper is, however, to explain how the perception and behavior of the Japanese people are actually structured. This is the subject that Benedict tried to explain by defining the Western society as a guilt culture and the Japanese society as a shame culture and focusing on the

difference between the two. She finely compared the patterns of ethical thinking and behavior of the two societies based on respective cultures¹²⁾. She wrote that, whereas it was important by the Western culture to act according to an absolute ethical principle, the Japanese people acted according to the situation or the atmosphere of the occasion in which they find themselves from time to time, trying to avoid shame or embarrassment, because being incapable of acting in accordance with the surrounding situation or atmosphere was a shame for them. Expressions such as “situational ethics” and “ethics of the occasion” are often used to explain such a frame of mind and behavioral pattern. Let us look into this point in more detail.

In a group bound by common destiny, the “formation and maintenance of *wa*” constitutes an absolute requirement for achieving common objectives. Once the above is accepted as true, the “formation and maintenance of *wa*” is by itself the virtue of the highest priority for everyone; this thesis is given in the form of an order, “Do not disturb *wa*”. This order may look a maxim, but it is not, because it does not contain instructions as to how to act to fulfil it. Here, what give the guidelines would be *chu* (loyalty) and *kou* (filial devotion). Precisely, however, these do not indicate absolute values to people, either. I believe, therefore, it was necessary to provide around them various virtues and ethical values that enabled people to image the values of *chu* and *kou*. Such virtues and ethical values include gracefulness, diligence, honesty, good faith, modesty, thriftiness and so forth. It has to be noted that these words must be interpreted in the context of practicing *chu* and *kou* to “form and maintain *wa*”. These words have, naturally, their intrinsic and unmistakable meanings, but when one tries to practice any one of them in a tangible form, then the manner of practicing comes to matter depending on the situation of each occasion, namely the social interrelation between people. There may be cases where, even if a person acts out of an intention to show modesty in front of another, the latter does not interpret the action as such. This happens not because the former did not know the normal way of showing modesty but because the manner of showing modesty did not conform to what the situation required. That is to say, the proper manner of practicing or tangibly expressing a virtue depends on the situation of the occasion, and the situation of the occasion is formed by the interrelation between people. Therefore, in some cases the standard of behavior that the interrelation requires is spontaneously formed by the very interrelation, and in other cases, it is defined by the

12) See, *Ibid.*, pp.256-259.

behavior of an influential person or group. In the latter case, however, since even an influential person or group is bound by the unspoken order not to disturb *wa*, the initiative of the person or group must not be openly expressed, and the person or group sends an inconspicuous and simple signal to hint the intention to determine the situation of the occasion (here, it must be noted that such an intention may be good or bad from a social viewpoint). In such a situation, the others present there are expected to tacitly understand the real intention of the person or group behind the signal and behave accordingly¹³⁾. The above is one of the ways for an influential person or group to try to accomplish an intention in the context of practicing *chu* and *kou* to “form and maintain *wa*”, but at the same time, it is a mechanism, or a contrivance, to elicit the real “sense of proactive acceptance” of their participation in the “formation and maintenance of *wa*” from the people present.

In a society in which an ethical standard is defined from time to time depending on the situation of each occasion in life, the ability to read the situation of an occasion is essential. This is quite a heavy burden for anyone. We frequently use expressions such as “to understand ten hearing one” and “to resonate like a drum upon a strike” ; they are used to appreciate a high ability to “read the situation of an occasion”. To acquire this ability it is necessary to enhance personality through pursuit of learning and spiritual exercise (*shuyo*) and impose self-discipline. Benedict pointed out that to understand the meaning of *shuyo* it was necessary to sever self-discipline from its attachments of self-sacrifice and frustration¹⁴⁾. *Shuyo* and self-discipline in her context are the same as what *kendo* (Japanese art of fencing or swordmanship) and *sado* (tea ceremony) aim at. Those who follow these arts undergo trainings and impose self-discipline on themselves to acquire the ability to “read the situation of an occasion” and thus to reach the level of an adept in their respective fields. In these fields, an adept is a person who has risen above his or her self. One obtains the ability to “read the situation of an occasion” only through liberation from his or her self, but the ability cannot be obtained easily. Even if it is possible to read the situation of an occasion or two, it is impossible to do so every time. To solve the problem, however, an escape door is provided: one can simply postpone the judgment about the situation. That is, when it is too risky to make a decision in a very complicated situation, one may cease to do so. There may also be cases where the situation is so clearly unfavourable that it is better to postpone

13) Actually, there is a base which separates one's public and private selves for here.

14) See, *Ibid.*, pp.263-291.

judgment. The habit of doing as others do, which is often pointed out as a characteristic of the behavior of the Japanese people is a typical behavioral pattern to “form and maintain *wa*”. Such a behavioral pattern is adopted actively or passively, but in most cases, it is for avoiding risks. Be that as it may, carefully reading the situation of an occasion is essential for a Japanese to behave properly.

Hayao Kawai called regarding a behavioral standard hinted by the situation of an occasion as an ethical value “situational ethics”¹⁵⁾. Although the mechanism that combines the “formation and maintenance of *wa*” with *chu* and *kou* has lost a significant portion of its function as stated earlier, the ethical thinking and behavioral pattern based on the “situational ethics” have permeated deeply among people, and it is unlikely that they will disappear from the Japanese society. However, we must note that, while the “situational ethics” triggers exercise of flexibility and creativity in people’s thought and behavior, it also leads to avoidance of responsibility and unspoken pressure from an organization on its members or from a person to others.

IV. Searching for the Problem of the “Spirit of *Wa*”: By Reference Questionnaire Survey about Ethical Values of Students at Monoyama Gakuinn University

In relation to the characteristics of the Japanese ethical thinking and behavioral pattern explained so far, I would like to present hereafter the analysis results of an opinion survey of Japanese university students and the problems in and perspective regarding the formation of the perception of value and ethics of the Japanese people in the future.

Before entering into details, I would like to comment on two points in the survey results that are unique especially from the viewpoint of the “situational ethics”.

The first point relates to the similarities and differences between the replies to Cases I and IV and those to Cases II and III of the questionnaire. Cases I and IV represented scenarios indicating a possibility of physical danger to a client of a corporation. On the other hand, a possibility of physical danger to a client was involved also in Cases II and III, but the extent and imminence of the danger were not as clear as in Cases I and IV. In each of the Cases I to IV, the students mostly agreed to the statements, which were provided in the

15) See, Kawai, Hayao, *Bosei-Syakai Nihonn no Byouri (Japanese Pathology as Motherly Society)*, Cyuokoronsya, 1976.

survey sheets, that there was an ethical problem and that they would not act as the sales person in the scenario who ignored or neglected the danger. However, whereas the ratios of the students who agreed to these statements in Cases I and IV were more than 80%, the same in Cases II and III were a little over 50% only. The difference is attributable to the difference in the cognizance of the students as to the probability and nature of the danger, covert or overt, to the client in each of the scenarios. The ratio of the students who recognized the danger exceeded 80% in Cases I and IV, but the ratio was approximately 50% in Cases II and III. Generally, one can explain such a result as a reflection of the characteristics of the two types of scenarios. However, in addition to that, a typically Japanese way of thinking based on the “situational ethics” is seen in the students’ responses. To act in accordance with the “situational ethics”, it is necessary in the first place to “read the situation of the occasion”. To “read the situation of an occasion” means to answer the question raised by oneself, “What is the dominant factor that governs the situation, and is there one such factor, or more?” Thus, to act in accordance with the “situational ethics” means to act in accordance with the governing factor of a situation if the factor is overwhelmingly stronger than others or to seek how to balance various factors of the situation if there are plural factors and it is difficult to determine which is the strongest. In the scenarios of Cases I and IV, it was easy for the students to understand that the possibility of danger to the client was significant and this constituted the governing factor of the situation, and therefore they answered accordingly. With respect to the scenarios of Cases II and III, on the other hand, it was not easy to understand the possibility of danger specifically, and there were additional factors: in Case II such additional factor was industriousness or hard working, and in Case III it was a possibility of buying top-brand articles. In each of these cases, most of the students presumably “read the situation of the occasion” that although there was an ethical problem in the scenario the other factor was also significant, and replied that neither of the factors was decisive. Each of the Cases I to IV included a question regarding the influence of friendship on ethical behavior; the replies of the students to the question also reflected the “situational ethics” in a manner similar to the above.

The second point relates to the replies to the general elicitations in Questions 33 to 76: the “situational ethics” clearly showed in the replies to those questions. The ethics and social responsibility in corporate activities has become a very important issue in the current Japanese society that surrounds the students. To prevent the possibility of overt or covert

danger a person and the dignity of an individual also constitute predominant factors. As a result, most of the students replied affirmatively to the questions directly related to these issues. However, when a question involved another factor or a question did not directly relate to such a predominant factor, the ratio of replies saying that neither of the factors was decisive increased markedly. The percentage of the answerers who chose any one of alternatives 4, 5 and 6, meaning that neither of the factors in the question was decisive, in those questions was 30 to over 50. The number of the questions in which more than 40% of the answerers selected alternative 4, 5 or 6 amounted to 21 of a total of 44, and the number of the questions in which more than 50% selected the same was 8. The above does not mean that Japanese college students have fallen into relativism. When two or more factors are involved in a situation, which is the predominant value and which values must be taken into consideration are defined by the very situation. Given this condition, we can select a value or values from among plural ones only according to an actual and specific situation. Facing a question of such a nature, many of the students could only reply neutrally that neither of the factors was decisive. The negative feeling of the students toward a door-to-door vendor or the like seen in the replies to Questions 36 and 37 is attributable to the facts that there have been various cases of illegal business practices of door-to-door vendors over the last years and that our university is calling attention of students through anti-illegal-business campaigns.

As explained above, as far as the survey results are concerned, the perception of value and ethics of Japanese college students reflects the “situational ethics” typical of the Japanese society. It has to be noted, however, that the high percentage of the neutral reply is not entirely attributable to the “situational ethics”. In addition to the “situational ethics”, there must surely be poor ethical imagination due to a lack of experience of social interrelation and a simple lack of knowledge in the background of the neutral reply. There is no question in that these three factors contribute to the formation of the perception of value and ethics of Japanese college students. It is true that it is necessary to correctly understand how these factors contribute to the formation of their perception of value and ethics and in what proportion each of them is involved in the process, but focusing too much on the proportion is not very constructive. Poor ethical imagination due to a lack of experience of social interrelation and knowledge is not exclusive to college students but is common to all people, and it is impossible for everyone to overcome such shortcomings; it is a permanent problem that can be solved only gradually.

The poor ethical imagination due to a lack of experience of social interrelation and knowledge restricts the ability to read the situation of an occasion, and what is necessary for everyone is, therefore, the modesty to admit their own lack of experience and knowledge, and on that basis, to refine the ability to read the situation little by little through occasions in which they find themselves. The fluidity and diversification of society will increase, and this will lead to a society where flexibility, creativity and well-balance frame of mind are required. The importance of the “situational ethics” is expected to increase in such a society, but in order for this to happen, it will be necessary to correct the negative facets of the “situational ethics” and thus extend its positive facets. How is it possible? First, it is necessary to focus our attention on the occasions and processes where we accumulate and refine social experience and knowledge, since it is the experience and knowledge that form the foundation for the ability to “read the situation of an occasion”. What is essential here is to make the situation of such occasions and processes open and introduce diversity and multiplicity to them so that people have chance to experience them more often. When this is accomplished, the “spirit of *wa* to avoid confrontation” and the “spirit of *wa* to ignore confrontation or incoherence” will surely be replaced with the “spirit of *wa* to adjust confrontation or incoherence after it has taken place”, or the “creative spirit of *wa*”.

Appendix 1: This question table was drawn up by Dr. Kun Young Chung (Keimyung University, Korea) and Dr.
John W. Eichenseher (University of Wisconsin-Madison, U.S.A.).

Dear Reader:

This is a research of business practices and values conducted in several countries around the world. We aim to explore the way business practices are perceived in different countries. We appreciate your taking the time to answer the following questions.

Thank you

Below are four scenarios describing interactions between marketers and consumers along with corresponding actions. We are interested in your opinion regarding certain aspects of these situations and the actions given. Assume that you are faced with these situations; please evaluate each one of them and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements following these situations.

- I. An automobile salesperson is told by a customer that a serious engine problem exists with a trade-in. However, because of the salesperson's desire to make the sale, the salesperson does not inform the used car appraiser at the dealership of the problem.

Action: The salesperson closes the deal that includes the trade-in.

Completely Disagree Completely Agree

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----|--|
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (1) | The situation described above involves an ethical problem. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (2) | The overall harm (if any) done as a result of the salesperson's action would be very small. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (3) | Most people would agree that the salesperson's action would be very small. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (4) | There is a very small likelihood that the salesperson's action will actually cause any harm. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (5) | The salesperson's action will not cause any harm in an immediate future. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (6) | If the salesperson is a personal friend of the dealership's owner, the action is wrong. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (7) | The salesperson's action will harm very few people (if any). |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (8) | I would act in the same manner as the salesperson did in the above scenario. |

- II. A young man, recently hired as a salesman for a local retail store, has been working very hard to favorably impress his boss with his selling ability. At times, this young man, anxious for an order, has been a little overeager. To get the order, he exaggerates the value of the item or withholds relevant information concerning the product he is trying to sell. No fraud or deceit is intended by his actions, he is simply over-eager.

Action: His boss, the owner of the retail store, is aware of this salesman's actions, but he has done nothing to stop such practice.

Completely Disagree Completely Agree

- | | | |
|-------------------|------|--|
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (9) | The situation described above involves an ethical problem. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (10) | The overall harm (if any) done as a result of the owner's action would be very small. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (11) | Most people would agree that the owner's action is wrong. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (12) | There is a very small likelihood that the owner's action will actually cause any harm. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (13) | The owner's action will not cause any harm in an immediate future. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (14) | If the owner is a personal friend of the customer, the action is wrong. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (15) | The owner's action will harm very few people (if any). |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | (16) | I would act in the same manner as the owner of the store did in the above scenario. |

III. Sets of a well-known brand of "good" china dinnerware are advertised on sale at a considerable discount by a local retailer. Several patterns of a typical 45-piece service for eight are listed. The customer may also buy any "odd" pieces which are available in stock (for instance, a butter dish, a gravy bowl, etc.). The ad does not indicate, however, that these patterns have been discontinued by the manufacturer.

Action: The retailer offers this information only if the customer directly asks if the merchandise is discontinued.

Completely Disagree Completely Agree

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (17) The situation described above involves an ethical problem.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (18) The overall harm (if any) done as a result of the retailer's action would be very small.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (19) Most people would agree that the retailer's action is wrong.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (20) There is a very small likelihood that the retailer's action will actually cause any harm.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (21) The retailer's action will not cause any harm in an immediate future.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (22) If the retailer is a personal friend of the customer, the action is wrong.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (23) The retailer's action will harm very few people (if any).
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (24) I would act in the same manner as the retailer did in the above scenario.

IV. A person bought a new car from a franchised automobile dealership in the local area. Eight months after the car was purchased, he began having problems with the transmission. He took the car back to the dealer, and some minor adjustments were made. During the next few months he continually had a similar problem with the transmission slipping. Each time the dealer made only minor adjustments on the car. Again, during the 13th month the car had been bought, the man returned to the dealer because the transmission still was not functioning properly. At this time, the transmission was completely overhauled.

Action: Since the warranty was for only one year (12 months from the date of purchase), the dealer charged the full price for parts and labor.

Completely Disagree Completely Agree

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (25) The situation described above involves an ethical problem.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (26) The overall harm (if any) done as a result of the dealer's action would be very small.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (27) Most people would agree that the dealer's action is wrong.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (28) There is a very small likelihood that the dealer's action will actually cause any harm.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (29) The dealer's action will not cause any harm in an immediate future.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (30) If the dealer is a personal friend of the customer, the action is wrong.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (31) The dealer's action will harm very few people (if any).
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (32) I would act in the same manner as the dealer did in the above scenario.

You find below a series of general statements listed below and in the next page. Each represents a commonly held opinion, and there are no right or wrong answers. You will probably disagree with some items and agree with others. We are interested in the extent to which you agree or disagree with such matters of opinion.

Completely Disagree Completely Agree

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (33) Most business in this country do not truly care about individual consumers.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (34) Most businesses generally try to deal with me in a fair way and, thus, I try to deal in a fairway with them.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (35) Free enterprise is the best form of an economic system.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (36) I never purchase anything from a door-to-door salesperson.

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- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (37) Most salespeople cannot be trusted; they will say whatever they need to in order to make a sale.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (38) Being ethical and socially responsible is the most important thing a firm can do.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (39) While output quality is essential to corporate success, ethics and social responsibility is not.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (40) Communication is more important to the overall effectiveness of an organization than whether or not it is concerned with ethics and social responsibility.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (41) Corporate planning and goal setting sessions should include discussions of ethic and social responsibility.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (42) The most important concern for a firm is making a profit, even if it means bending or breaking the rules.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (43) The ethics and social responsibility of a firm is essential to its long term profitability.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (44) The overall effectiveness of a business can be determined to a great extent by the degree to which it is ethical and socially responsible.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (45) To remain competitive in global environment, business firms will have to disregard ethics and social responsibility.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (46) Social responsibility and profitability can be compatible.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (47) Business ethics and social responsibility can be compatible.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (48) A firm's first priority should be employee morale.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (49) Business has a social responsibility beyond making a profit.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (50) If survival of a business enterprise is at stake, then you must forget about ethics and social responsibility.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (51) Efficiency is much more important to a firm than whether or not the firm is seen as ethical or socially responsible.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (52) Good ethics is often good business.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (53) If the stockholders are unhappy, nothing else matters.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (54) I go to the mosque / church regularly.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (55) Spiritual values are more important than material things.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (56) If people were more religious, this would be a better country.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (57) A person should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (58) Risks to another should never be tolerated, irrespective of how small the risks might be.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (59) The existence of potential harm to others is always wrong, irrespective of the benefits to be gained.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (60) One should never psychologically or physically harm another person.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (61) One should not perform an action which might in any way threaten the dignity and welfare of another individual.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (62) If an action could harm an innocent other, then it should not be done.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (63) Deciding whether or not to perform an act by balancing the positive consequences of the act against the negative consequences of the act is immoral.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (64) The dignity and welfare of people should be the most important concern in any society.

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (65) It is never necessary to sacrifice the welfare of others.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (66) Moral actions are those which closely match ideals of the most "perfect" action..
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (67) There are no ethical principles that are so important that they should be a part of any code of ethics.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (68) What is ethical varies from one situation and society to another.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (69) Moral standards should be seen as being individualistic: what one person considers to be moral may be judged to be immoral by another person.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (70) Different types of moralities cannot be compared as to "rightness".
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (71) Questions of what is ethical for everyone can never be resolved since what is moral or immoral is up to the individual.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (72) Moral standards are simply personal rules which indicate how a person should behave, and are not to be applied in making judgments of others.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (73) Ethical considerations in interpersonal relations are so complex that individuals should be allowed to formulate their own individual codes.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (74) Rigidly codifying an ethical position that prevents certain types of actions could stand in the way of better human relations and adjustment.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (75) No rule concerning lying can be formulated: whether a lie is permissible or not permissible totally depends upon the situation.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (76) Whether a lie is judged to be moral or immoral depends upon the circumstances surrounding the action.

For classification purposes and in order to see if this sample is representative, please provide the following information about yourself.

- (77) Sex: 1. Male 2. Female
- (78) Age: _____ yearss
- (79) City of residence: _____
- (80) Years of Study:
1. first year 2. second years 3. third year 4. fourth year 5. fifth year 6. more
- (81) Major(s): _____
- (82) Your approximate grade point average for the last 60 credit-hours: _____
- (83) Preferred industry for future employment: _____
- (84) Preferred initial position for future employment: _____
- (85)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

Appendix 2 Summary of Data (Momoyama-Gakuinn University, in Japan)

1. Test period: 2004.12.02-2004.12.18.
2. Subjects: 248 students who major in Accounting, Business Administration, Management Information, Sociology, Economics, and Literature at Momoyama-Gakuin University in Japan.

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	
Q1	4	6	5	9	14	18	50	30	112	248
Q2	113	46	41	15	8	8	9	1	6	247
Q3	64	30	32	22	19	26	17	18	19	247
Q4	94	49	37	22	11	15	10	5	5	248
Q5	141	34	32	12	7	5	4	5	8	248
Q6	41	13	15	16	38	10	24	20	70	247
Q7	84	31	36	24	24	18	18	7	6	248
Q8	117	40	31	12	19	11	10	2	6	248
Q9	7	10	18	21	47	44	44	22	35	248
Q10	25	16	49	42	26	32	32	17	9	248
Q11	10	23	36	26	48	15	38	23	28	247
Q12	23	15	55	32	18	25	40	27	12	247
Q13	71	29	60	26	23	13	14	8	2	246
Q14	29	20	19	24	42	25	31	16	41	247
Q15	35	23	52	41	18	20	32	17	10	248
Q16	63	25	31	20	27	23	33	18	8	248
Q17	21	19	19	20	39	33	24	24	49	248
Q18	29	16	26	30	22	31	45	22	27	248
Q19	20	29	27	30	31	25	30	25	31	248
Q20	26	19	24	31	23	34	43	28	19	247
Q21	58	22	45	49	26	9	16	14	9	248
Q22	36	19	26	16	58	21	29	11	32	248
Q23	31	21	41	28	23	28	35	19	22	248
Q24	60	22	35	24	33	14	29	17	14	248
Q25	11	6	4	4	11	14	23	40	135	248
Q26	115	41	40	16	9	10	5	4	7	247
Q27	15	4	11	3	13	14	21	38	128	247
Q28	108	46	31	23	20	9	4	4	3	248
Q29	136	36	35	9	10	8	4	5	5	248

Q30	43	16	15	11	39	9	20	13	82	248
Q31	110	36	34	16	16	7	16	8	5	248
Q32	129	41	27	10	13	8	7	7	6	248
Q33	13	9	41	27	31	34	55	16	22	248
Q34	11	10	35	37	54	21	29	28	23	248
Q35	6	4	12	22	55	26	51	37	35	248
Q36	6	1	12	11	27	17	18	38	117	247
Q37	1	2	9	17	33	43	41	42	59	247
Q38	0	2	8	11	23	37	52	41	74	248
Q39	43	32	43	25	25	24	19	19	18	248
Q40	4	2	4	5	25	23	56	49	80	248
Q41	2	2	3	6	22	30	66	39	78	248
Q42	48	34	36	24	32	28	21	14	10	247
Q43	1	4	3	3	24	17	53	63	80	248
Q44	5	3	10	18	50	34	44	42	42	248
Q45	70	34	36	21	26	21	15	13	12	248
Q46	12	3	14	24	52	33	50	26	34	248
Q47	3	4	8	14	43	33	41	51	51	248
Q48	9	3	19	26	38	40	48	34	31	248
Q49	2	0	2	9	10	16	41	53	112	245
Q50	58	25	33	35	42	27	14	7	7	248
Q51	24	11	36	29	61	45	20	13	9	248
Q52	3	4	14	8	29	32	59	42	57	248
Q53	21	11	23	28	60	48	29	17	9	246
Q54	144	22	19	9	21	12	11	2	5	245
Q55	5	10	13	12	45	36	56	27	44	248
Q56	58	29	45	24	45	16	12	9	7	245
Q57	5	0	6	12	21	26	39	34	105	248
Q58	4	2	12	12	18	34	44	39	82	247
Q59	6	5	10	15	61	40	35	25	51	248
Q60	4	2	7	13	24	19	41	32	106	248
Q61	6	1	7	7	21	23	34	37	111	247
Q62	3	2	5	9	17	24	37	54	97	248
Q63	30	17	34	20	61	27	21	16	22	248
Q64	1	2	2	7	13	28	55	52	88	248
Q65	3	1	2	8	34	27	58	33	82	248
Q66	20	16	31	35	54	36	23	22	11	248
Q67	25	20	33	17	44	25	33	17	34	248

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Q68	5	3	11	5	31	34	52	39	65	245
Q69	3	3	12	8	55	34	56	22	53	246
Q70	1	1	8	9	36	43	50	33	66	247
Q71	5	3	17	23	36	40	47	28	48	247
Q72	4	13	24	28	43	48	44	20	24	248
Q73	7	5	7	18	61	51	52	22	25	248
Q74	9	2	12	21	69	51	41	25	18	248
Q75	5	2	10	11	30	30	59	41	60	248
Q76	1	8	10	14	28	36	44	42	65	248

(2008年2月4日受理)

Historical Transformation of the “Spirit of *Wa*” and the Problem: A Foresight into the Future of Japanese Society and Thought of Management

Teruso TANIGUCHI

The social concern with ethics and moral in Japan has been growing for the last several years. We should notice that there are attempts to revive the “spirit of *wa*” more than little. The questions we have to ask here is whether we examined historical transformations of the “spirit of *wa*” and the problem. The purpose of this study is to propose a hypothesis about historical transformations of the “spirit of *wa*”, and to reveal the problem.

In the first part of this paper I provide an explanation about the “spirit of *wa*”, often translated into English as the spirit of harmony, which was codified by Prince Shotoku in the form of the Seventeen-article Constitution. In the first place, he told, “Harmony is the greatest of virtues”, and then instructed that it was necessary to reach an agreement among people through amicable dialogues refraining from acting arbitrarily on authority, and concluded that once a consensus was formed anything could be accomplished, asserting the dramatic effect of *wa*. He also emphasized the importance of serving the public without being tethered to personal affairs. The “spirit of *wa*” set out in the Constitution was based on humbleness toward one’s self and others derived from the consciousness of the fact that one can know the true and real being of anything in the universe only imperfectly.

In the second part of this paper I explore Japanese Way of Introducing of Confucianism and “mechanisms” to” proactive acceptance “of the “spirit of *wa*”. In after times, though after a long time, up to the end of World War II, attempts were made from the viewpoint of running a state to make the “spirit of *wa*” permeate among people as an ethical model of the society. The meaning of the “spirit of *wa*” has changed as follows through the process. It is a frame of mind to place emphasis on avoiding confrontation or antagonism, and in some cases such as where harmony among the members of a society is threatened, even to refuse to admit the existence confrontation or incoherence, rather than to adjust it after it has happened. To correctly understand the characteristics of the ethical perception and behavioral pattern of the Japanese society, it is necessary to focus our attention on the contrast between the “spirit of *wa*” that Prince Shotoku set out in the Constitution and that of later generations.

In the third part of this paper I clarify that the transformed “spirit of *wa*” has been penetrated deeply into society as “situational ethics” at the present period. We must note that, while the “situational ethics” triggers exercise of flexibility and creativity in people’s thought and behavior, it also leads to avoidance of responsibility and unspoken pressure from an organization on its members or from a person to others.

In Conclusion, the paper suggests that on the one hand, what is necessary for everyone is the modesty to admit their own lack of experience and knowledge, and on that basis, to refine the ability to read the situation little by little through occasions in which they find themselves, on the other, what is essential here is to make the situation of such occasions and processes open and introduce diversity and multiplicity to them so that people have chance to experience them more often. When these are accomplished, the “spirit of *wa* to avoid confrontation” and the “spirit of *wa* to ignore confrontation or incoherence” will surely be replaced with the “spirit of *wa* to adjust confrontation or incoherence after it has taken place”, or the “creative spirit of *wa*”.